

# FY 2024 BUDGET RECOMMENDATION BUDGET BRIEF

*Maura T. Healey, Governor | Kimberley Driscoll, Lt. Governor*

## **Historic Higher Education Investments**

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### **Introduction**

The Healey-Driscoll administration is dedicated to supporting equitable access to quality higher education. That commitment is reflected in our FY24 budget recommendation, which proposes an historic funding increase of \$370.9 million (23%) over FY23 to expand college affordability, support campuses, and provide extensive wraparound services to students.

### **Affordable Higher Education and Student Success**

H.1 proposes \$152 million in new investments for financial aid and student success. This includes a \$93 million increase to the MASSGrant Plus scholarship program, which enables low-income, in-state undergraduate students to attend public higher education without worrying about mandatory tuition and fees. This increase, the largest ever in the program's history, will expand the scholarship to part-time students and cover additional direct costs of attendance, providing at least 33,000 students with assistance for tuition, fees, books, and supplies.

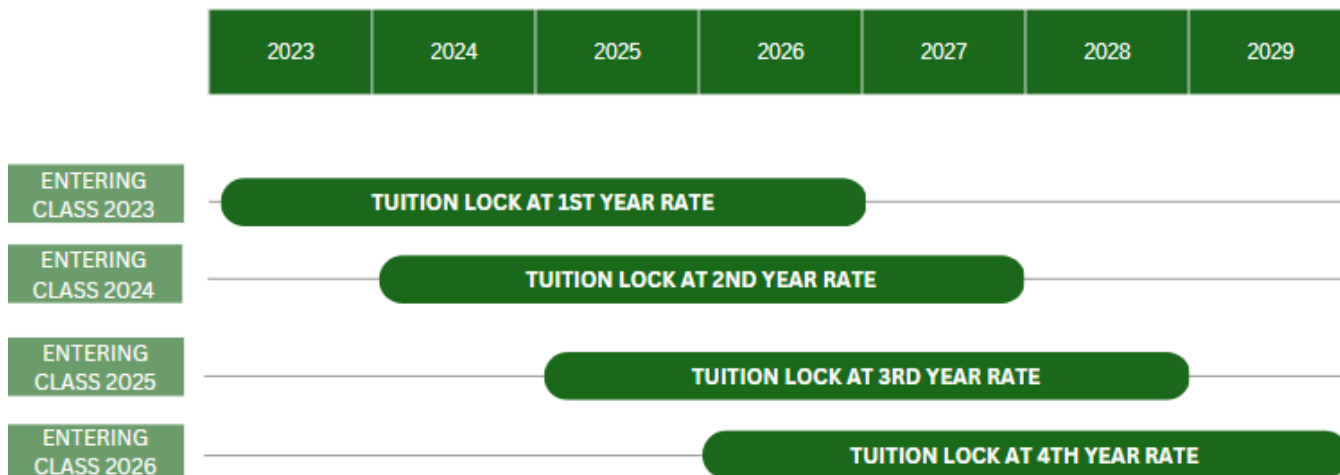
This investment is in addition to \$20 million for the [MassReconnect](#) scholarship program. MassReconnect will provide students 25 years of age and older the opportunity to obtain a free higher education degree at any public community college in the Commonwealth. This program empowers students to complete their education and pursue training for in-demand jobs across industries, including health care, education, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and behavioral health. For more information, please see the [MassReconnect budget brief](#).

The H.1 budget recommendation also includes \$59 million for innovative cost predictability and transparency strategies across public community colleges, state universities, and the University of Massachusetts (UMass).

- For example, a [tuition or fee lock](#) for in-state, undergraduate students attending UMass or state universities would lock in four years at the same rate for each class of incoming students.
- For the institutions, this would serve as a recruitment tool in a competitive admissions environment and provide modest revenue growth from class to class.
- For students and families, this would incentivize on-time degree completion and provide cost stability, protect from inflationary increases, and help keep public higher education accessible and affordable.
- Similarly, community college students would be assured that tuition and fees will remain unchanged from the current academic year into FY24.

## Budget Brief: Historic Higher Education Investments

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To complement these investments, H.1 recommends \$2 million for financial aid streamlining and modernization. This funding supports a strategic review, consolidation, and streamlining of existing higher education financial aid programs and would establish a more user-friendly, accessible, and transparent system to apply for financial aid.

### Strategic Higher Education Investments

H.1 proposes landmark higher education investments to improve campus climate, provide greater student support, and make capital investments. Across the 15 community colleges, nine state universities, and the University of Massachusetts, H.1 recommends:

- \$140 million for additional one-time investment in capital improvements, nearly double the historical levels of annual capital investment, for study, design, and construction of campus instructional lab facilities, infrastructure modernization, decarbonization, and critical repair. This funding would help address the growing backlog of deferred maintenance across higher education institutions.
- \$30 million for a new student support services initiative including high-quality academic and wraparound services, such as internship incentives, workforce development, and health services. The funding is targeted at improving retention, ensuring students have the resources they need to finish their degree, and the skills necessary to excel in their career path. These funds will be distributed based on each institution's share of Pell-eligible students.
- \$18 million for the Supporting Urgent Community College Equity through Student Services (SUCCESS) Fund, an increase of \$4 million (29%) over FY23 – for grants to community colleges to provide holistic supports and services to improve outcomes for their most vulnerable populations, including low-income, first-generation, minority, and disabled students and LGBTQ+ students.
- \$18 million for additional diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at UMass and state universities – including student advising, student support series, as well as faculty and staff recruitment and retention.

- \$4.4 million for community college and state university mental health initiatives – including crisis services, therapy, the assessment of learning disorders, responses to sexual assault, substance use disorder services, and assistance to students struggling with stress, anxiety, or other mental health needs.

These investments build on a 3% increase to base funding for each segment of public higher education: \$10.1 million for community colleges and \$9.8 million for state universities to be allocated based on a performance funding formula, as well as a \$19.3 million increase for UMass.

Through strategic and historic higher education investments, the Healey-Driscoll administration will continue to create ways to make higher education more accessible and attainable throughout the Commonwealth.